Interrogative Types and Left Periphery:
some data from the *Fiorentino* Dialect[*]

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1. Introduction

In the present paper I intend to analyse the syntactic structure and the semantic interpretations of the interrogative clauses of the Fiorentino dialect introduced by the particle [*o*]. This particle, called *pleonastic interjection* in traditional dialectological works and *o-morpheme* by Poletto (2000), is present in many local varieties of Tuscany, with differences in use and syntactic distribution[1]. The analysis will be principally descriptive, integrated by some theoretical remarks. The study of *o*-questions can shed light on how some propositional semantic features are encoded in the syntax of the left periphery (the CP, in generative theory). The data are obtained from a group of five informants of different age (from 22 to 79).

In the Fiorentino dialect the particle *o* can introduce *wh-* and *yes/no* questions and imperative sentences as well. It occurs in the left periphery and interacts with such structures as the *clitic left dislocation* and the *hanging topic* in a very peculiar way. In the analysis some phenomena of microvariation will be taken into account. Some examples of sentences with the *o* particle are given in (1):

(1) a. *O* icché succede costì?
    'o what happens there'
    "What on earth does it happen there?"

  b. *O* che tu-l'hai visto Mario?
    'o that you-him-have seen M'.
    "Have you seen Mario?"

  c. *O* smettila infine!
    'o stop-it at last'
    "Stop it at last!"

1For the differences between the Fiorentino and the Elbano dialects in this respect, see Chinellato-Garzonio (2003).

The *o* particle is optional; so the sentences in (1) are perfectly grammatical also without it, but, in this case, they are standard questions and imperatives:

(2) a. Icché succede costì?
     b. Che tu l'hai visto Mario?
     c. Smettila infine!

I will not discuss here the imperative sentences introduced by *o*. The function of the *o* particle in the interrogative sentences is to mark them as "non-canonical", namely as sentences that don't express a question asked to obtain a piece of new information. There are at least five types of non-canonical interrogative sentences which in Fiorentino are introduced by the *o* particle:

a) surprise interrogatives;
b) "can't find the value" interrogatives;
c) rhetorical questions;
d) exclamative interrogatives;
e) imperative interrogatives;

Section 2 is dedicated to the semantic interpretations of these types, while in section 3 I will describe the syntax of the *o* particle. In section 4 some conclusions will be advanced.

2. Interpretation of *o* questions

The questions introduced by *o* are "non-canonical" (or, adopting another terminology, "non-standard") questions; this intuitive idea needs a more accurate formalization. In achieving this goal, the first step consists in distinguishing the *illocutive force* of a sentence from its *sentential force*. The illocutive force of a sentence relates to speaker's intentions; the Italian sentence in (3), although declarative, has the illocutive force of *asking* (this example is taken from Portner & Zanuttini, 2002):

(3) Avrei bisogno di sapere come andare all'aeroporto.
     '*pro* would-have need of know how   go   to-the airport'

"I'd need to know how I can reach the airport."

The sentential force (discussed by Chierchia & McConnel-Ginet, 1990) refers to the conventional pragmatic force associated with a sentence type. Portner & Zanuttini (2002; 2003a) claim that the sentential force is not directly marked in syntax, but follows from the combination of some semantic properties of the sentence, which are directly represented at syntactic level. Adopting such a framework, it may be said that in *o*-questions, the particle marks some semantic property (to be defined), which adds to the other interrogative properties and changes the sentential force of the clause; in fact the conventional pragmatic force associated to *o*-interrogatives isn't that of *asking* and it is different in every "non-standard" question type. Obenauer (2003) claims that in *wh- surprise* questions (which in Pagotto, the Northern Italian dialect he analyses, are marked by different means) the *surprise* interpretation is arrived at compositionally through the combination of the following elements: the *wh-* meaning, the interrogative force (both properties of standard *wh-* interrogatives) and the surprise modality (which types these questions), all encoded at syntactic level.

So (4a) is a standard question and requests an answer, while (4b) is a non-standard (namely *can't find the value*: see § 2.2) question, and its function is to express a certain attitude of the speaker regarding the propositional content:

(4)   a.   Come t'hai fatto ad arrivare qui?
            'how you-have done to arrive here'
            "How did you manage to arrive here?"

       b.   *O* come t'hai fatto ad arrivare qui?
            'o how you-have done to arrive here'
            "How on earth did you manage to arrive here?"

In the following paragraphs I will describe the five non-standard interrogative types, that in Fiorentino are introduced by *o*.

2.1 Surprise interrogatives

The *surprise* interrogative type (sometimes called *surprise/disapproval* type) is one of the best analysed non-standard interrogative types in recent works and papers on Northern Italian

dialects; Munaro & Obenauer (1999) and Obenauer (2003) study surprise *wh-* questions in Pagotto (where, roughly speaking, they are marked by the fronting of the *wh-* phrase); Munaro & Poletto (2003) study surprise questions in a set of Veneto dialects, where they are marked by sentence typing particles; Poletto (2000: 69) outlines the use of the particle *o* in surprise interrogatives of the Fiorentino dialect.

In *surprise* questions the speaker expresses an attitude of astonishement toward the propositional content, often with a negative orientation (that's why this type is called sometimes *disapproval interrogative*). Examples are given in (5):

(5)   a.   *O* icché tu stai facendo?
               'o what you are doing'
               "What on earth are you doing?"

        b.   *O* che tu sei ancora costì?
               'o that you are still there'
               "Are you really still there?"

In sentence (5a) the speaker is surprised by the activity of the interlocutor and perhaps reproaches him/her; in (5b) the speaker expresses a surprise attitude at the fact that the hearer is still in a certain place. It should be noticed that the propositional content of a *yes/no surprise* question is "true" in any case. Without the *o* particle the sentences in (5) would be standard questions, put to obtain some unknown information.

As said above, the *o* particle is the marker of a specific semantic property, which adds to the standard interrogative properties and types the sentence as a "non-standard" question. Such property needs a precise definition and I argue that in *surprise* questions it is related to the value of the *wh-* element or the entire *yes/no* propositional content; in a *surprise* question the value of the *wh-* element is known or evident:

(6)   *O* icché tu mangi?
        'o what you eat'
        "What on earth are you eating?"

In (6) the speaker sees what the interlocutor is eating and the sentence has the function of manifesting his/her surprise (or, maybe, disgust) about the food: so the *wh-* value is known, and

what is relevant is that it is ranked high in a non-plausibility/non-decency scale (for a similar analysis of *surprise* questions in Veneto dialects, see Munaro & Poletto, 2003). Obviously, in a *yes/no surprise* question, all the propositional content has a high degree in this scale[2]:

(7)   *O* che tu dormi?
        'o that you sleep'
        "Are you still sleeping?"

In (7) the speaker reproaches the interlocutor for the fact he/she is still sleeping by a *surpise/disapproval* question. Following these considerations, it is possible to say that the semantic property of questions like these is the non-plausibility (or non-decency) of the value of their *wh-* elements or propositional contents. This has to do the propositional force of this interrogative type: as for its illocutive force, it is easy to see that it can be used to manifest surprise or disapproval, to reproach, to command, etc.

2.2 "Can't find the value" interrogatives

The definition *can't find the value* (henceforth *cfv*) for a specific type of special questions has been proposed by Obenauer (1994) in the analysis of French *diable* interrogatives. By a *cfv* question "(...) the speaker expresses that he is unable to come up with a (plausible, acceptable) value (for the *wh-* phrase), though he has tried to find one (or more)"[3]. In Fiorentino such non-standard interrogatives are marked by the *o* particle:

(8)   a.   *O* indove ho messo le chiavi?
                'o where have put the keys'
                "Where (the hell) did I put my keys?"

        b.   *O* quando tu sei tornato?
                'o when you are returned'
                "When (the hell) have you returned?"

2In the Veneto varieties studied by Munaro & Poletto (2003), *surprise* interrogative particles are found only in *wh-* questions and not in *yes/no* questions. In this respect Fiorentino behaves differently in that *yes/no surprise* questions are equally marked by *o*. This can be explained claiming that Veneto dialects particles denote a *non-plausibility* value within a set of more than two values (namely, for a *wh-*phrase), while Fiorentino *o* has the additional option of doing the same also with a set of only two (the *yes/no* propositional content and its opposite).
3Obenauer (2003: § 5).

In the sentence (8a) the speaker (who addresses the question to him-/herself, an option very common for *cfv* questions) manifests his/her disappointment at the fact he/she cannot think (despite his/her attempts) of a place where the keys could have been left; similarly, in (8b) he/she cannot think of a time when the interlocutor came back.

Cfv interrogatives are more similar to standard questions than *surprise* interrogatives: the sentence (8b) can be appropriately asked to require a new piece of information from the interlocutor; nevertheless it contains more semantic features than its standard counterpart (9):

(9)   Quando sei tornato?
        "When have you returned?"

(9) is a mere request for information; (8b) adds to this request, the information that the speaker has already tried in vain to give an answer to it (i.e. a value to the *wh-* phrase). The fact that *cfv* questions can be addressed to oneself is significant. C*fv* and standard interrogatives have a different semantic structure, but in many cases the former can be used with an illocutive force of *asking* and, thus, with a function similar to that of the latter.

It is worth noting that in Fiorentino (but also in other dialects and languages) only *wh- cfv* interrogatives have a marking device in syntax.

 2.3 Rhetorical questions

The definition *rhetorical question* calls for a clarification; the term may be understood in many senses: Obenauer (2003: §4) analyses and calls "rhetorical question" a non-standard *wh-* question type in the Pagotto dialect, which can be semantically interpreted as "(...) a sort of assertion that no corresponding value (for the *wh-* phrase) exists (...)". Fiorentino rhetorical *o-* questions have a different interpretation (as shown by the fact that they can be also *yes/no*). Some examples are given in (10):

(10)   a.   *O* che le devo fare io codeste cose?
             'o that them must do I these things'
             "Are these tasks due to me?"

        b.   *O* indove s'era detto di trovarci?
             'o where was said of find-us'
             "Where were we supposed to meet?"

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The function of sentence (10a) is to remind the interlocutor of the fact that the tasks are due to him/her; the function of (10b) is to reproach the interlocutor for the fact he/she was not present at the appointed meeting, probably due to his/her forgetfullness or carelessness. One could think that these are *disapproval* questions, but this interpretation follows from the illocutive force of (10a) and (10b); a further example of rhetorical *o*-question is (11):

(11)   O un eri te quello che sapeva la strada?
           'o not were you that that knew the road'
           "Wasn't it you the one who knew the road?"

The *o*-question in (11) corresponds to an assertion: it means (with some irony) that the interlocutor was the person supposed to know the right direction, but probably he/she somehow failed leading the speaker. Comparing this example to those in (10), it is easy to see that all these interrogatives have an obvious answer, an answer the interlocutor is supposed to know. This fact is related to the specific semantic property of these "non-standard" questions.

The semantic feature that types these rhetorical questions is a presupposition (broadly speaking) by the speaker, that the answer to them should be evident; in other words the, *wh-* value or the propositional content of these rhetorical questions are marked as *evident, obvious* (while, for instance, in *surprise* questions they are marked as *non-plausible, non-decent*).

2.4 Exclamative interrogatives

This non-standard interrogative type is very similar to *surprise* questions on the one hand and to rhetorical ones on the other. Examples are given in (12) (both the sentences have interrogative intonation, not exclamative):

(12)   a.   *O* che vestito tu ti sei comprato?
                    'o which garment you you are bought'
                    "What a garment you bought!"

           b.   O quanto piove?
                    'o how much rains'
                    "How much does it rain?", "What a rain!"

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In (12a) the speaker is commenting on the garment the interlocutor bought. The sentence is neutral, as it is impossible to know, without a context specification, whether the garment is beautiful, gorgeous or strange; maybe the speaker is astonished (and in this case the sentence has the illocutive force of *showing surprise*), but, without a specific context, (12a) contains only the implication that the garment is worth pointing out; (12b) has an evident answer ("a lot"), but its prominent semantic feature is that the event is worth underlying, as in (12a), and so it isn't a real rhetorical question as the sentences in (10) and (11); it can be said that rhetorical questions admit an answer in the conversation, even if it is obvious, while sentences in (12) do not. This leads to view the *o*-interrogatives in (12) as belonging to a specific non-standard question type, namely "exclamative interrogatives".

As claimed by Portner & Zanuttini (2002; 2003a), the exclamative propositional force derives from the combination of two semantic properties: *factivity* and *widening* (roughly speaking, every exclamative sentence has as its background a set of alternative propositions, and the function of the sentence is to widen the set of such propositions taken into account). The syntactic counterpart of this *widening* feature is the use of *wh-* elements (which are found in interrogatives as well as in exclamatives), and, as one could expect, in Fiorentino we find only *wh-* exclamative *o*-questions.

Hence, it is possible to conclude that, as in other *o*-question types, the particle marks a semantic property of the *wh-* phrase, and that this property is a [*+remarkable*] feature.

2.5 Imperative interrogatives

There is a last non-standard interrogative type, which in Fiorentino is marked by means of the *o* particle. These questions can be only *yes/no* questions and are equivalent to imperative sentences:

(13)   a.   *O* che tu la smetti?
                'o that you it stop'
                "Stop it!"

        b.   *O* che tu vai via?
                'o that you go away'
                "Go away!"

Following Portner & Zanuttini's (2003b) analysis of imperative sentences[4], we could claim that in, imperative interrogatives, the particle marks a semantic property that these sentences share with standard imperatives, and I further propose that this property is related to the sentential content of the clause: it isn't characterised as a proposition, but as a command; in other words, these sentences cannot be interpreted as interrogatives or declaratives, because the particle denotes the predicate as an action to be added to the hearer's to-do list.

2.6 Summarizing

In this section I have tried to describe the non-standard interrogative types which are marked in Fiorentino by the "modal" particle *o*. All these types maintain the semantic properties of standard interrogatives, but present an additional property, which is crucial to their typing. The *o* particle doesn't type directly non-standard interrogatives, but encodes this additional property of theirs. In (14) I summarize the *o*-question types along with their special property:

(14)	TYPE	*wh-* value	*yes/no* propositional content
	surprise	*non-plausible*	*non-plausible*
	cfv	*which cannot be found*	X
	rhetorical	*evident*	*evident*
	exclamative	*worth to be pointed out*	X
	imperative	X	*to be added to the hearer's to-do list*

3. Syntax of *o* questions

In this section I will analyse the syntactic behaviour of the particle *o*. At this point it should be evident that *o* occupies a very high position in the clause structure, as it usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. Describing the syntax of *o*, I will make use of terms taken from the *split-CP* framework, proposed by Rizzi (1997) and developed by Benincà (2001) for assertive sentences and by Poletto (2000) for interrogative sentences. In short, the *split-CP* hypothesis claims that the left periphery of a sentence (the Complementizer Phrase) is subdivided into a number maximal projections, whose specifiers contain such elements as *wh-* phrases, left dislocated phrases, topics, focuses and whose heads are represented by complementizers, clausal

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4 "An imperative must encode: 1) reference to an individual, the hearer, whose to-do list is to be updated; 2) a property to be added to that list" (Portner & Zanuttini: 2003b, 2).

particles and equivalent functional elements, lacking in some cases a phonetic realization.

3.1 General traits

It is possible to find the particle *o* only in main sentences and not in indirect questions:

(15)　a.　*Dimmi *o* quando tu vieni.
　　　　　 'tell-me o when you come'
　　　　　 "Tell me when you will come."

　　　 b.　*Dimmi *o* se tu vieni.
　　　　　 'tell-me o if you come'
　　　　　 "Tell me whether you will come."

If no dislocated element or *Hanging Topic* is present, the particle *o* appears at the very beginning of the question, close to the *wh-* element, as, for example, in (8b), here repeated as (16):

(16)　*O* quando tu sei tornato?

In *yes/no* questions the particle *o* must combine with the interrogative marker *che* (homophonous with the declarative complementizer)[5]:

(17)　a.　*O che* tu la smetti?
　　　　　 'o that you it stop'
　　　　　 "Stop it!"

　　　 b.　**O* tu la smetti?

This claim holds only for contemporary Fiorentino, but not for all the varieties of Tuscan[6]:

(18)　a.　*O* stai bono?　Variety of Portoferraio (Leghorn)
　　　　　 'O stay good'

5See Brandi & Cordin (1989: 140); this *che* and the complementizer *che* occupy different syntactic positions, since no lexical material (only clitics) can intervene between the former and the verb.
6See Chinellato & Garzonio (2003: 307); Rohlfs (1969: 158-159).

"Be quiet!"

b.   *O* mangiano i morti? Boccaccio, *Decamerone* (III, 8)
          'o eat the dead'
          "Do the dead really eat?"

The interrogative marker is optional only in negative *yes/no* questions introduced by *o* (and many speakers prefer the construction without it); it seems that *che* and the sentential negation tend to be mutually exclusive:

(19)   *O* (che) *un* tu dovevi partire domani?
        'o (that) not you had to leave tomorrow'
        "Wasn't you supposed to leave tomorrow?"

It is difficult to identify precisely the function of this *che*, considering the fact that in standard *yes/no* questions it is optional, but one can think that its presence is related to the capacity of Fiorentino to assign (by the *o* particle) a certain semantic feature to the entire propositional content of non-standard questions. As said above, Munaro & Poletto (2003) study the use of a number of particles in the Veneto dialects; among these we find the sentence-final particle *ti*, present in Pagotto (to which examples in (20) refer) and Veneziano, which marks *surprise* and *cfv* questions; a major difference between this *ti* and Fiorentino *o* regards the possibility to appear in *yes/no* questions: we find *ti* only in *wh-* questions (see fn. 2):

(20)   a.   Cossa falo, *ti*?
            'what do-he, TI'
            "What on earth is he doing?"

        b.   *I ze partii, *ti*?
            'they are departed, TI'
            "Have they departed?"

It is significant the fact that it is possible to drop this *che* if a sentential negation occurs. As we have seen, the propositional content of *yes/no o*-interrogatives is never, really questioned about: it is interpreted as true in *surprise* and evident in rhetorical questions. Sometimes negation

can mark an assumption by the speaker regarding the propositional content or, in sentences, the answer; italian postverbal negation *mica* always has this "semantic" feature. It seems that interrogative *che* and negation (in Fiorentino *un*) are mutually exclusive, because both work as an "assumption on the answer" marker. Considering these facts, it is possible to hypothesize that *che* contributes to assign a semantic feature to the entire propositional content of *yes/no* non-standard interrogatives; indeed, when one produces a *surprise* or a rhetorical question, he/she makes an assumption about the answer; in interrogatives working as imperatives, likewise, we can interpret the expected behaviour of the interlocutor as a kind of positive answer.

3.2 Left Dislocation and Hanging Topic

In this section the interaction between *o* and two types of thematisation is analysed. The two structures under discussion are Left Dislocation (henceforth *LD*) and Hanging Topic (henceforth *HT*); some phenomena of microvariation will be taken into account.

(21a) is an Italian example of *LD*, while (21b) is an instance of *HT*:

(21)   a.   Di Mario, non (ne) parla più nessuno.
               'of Mario, not (of-him) talks any more nobody'
               "Of Mario, nobody talks of him any more."

         b.   Mario, non ne parla più nessuno.
               'Mario, not of-him talks any more nobody'
               "Mario, nobody talks of him any more."

The differences between these two structures are well summed up by Benincà & Poletto (2002: §4): "*LD* elements maintain the preposition of the internal elements they correspond, *HT* can only be DPs ; (...) there can be more than one *LD* element, while only a single *HT* position per clause is possible; (...) *LD* elements require a resumptive pronoun only when they correspond to direct or partitive objects, (...) *HT*s always require a resumptive pronoun; (...) the copy of the *HT* can also be a tonic pronoun or an epithet, while the copy of a *LD* can only be a clitic"; *HT* and *LD* can cooccur in a fixed order *HT-LD*.

In Fiorentino, a *HT* always comes before the *o* particle:

(22)   Gianni, *o* quando tu ci parli?

'Gianni, o when you to-him talk'

"Gianni, when (the hell) are you going to talk to him?"

With *LD*s the situation is more complex; it must be said that in Fiorentino right dislocations are preferred to *LD*s with the consequence that the latter are not very common; (23a), where two dislocated elements appear, is preferred to (23b), even if the latter is grammatical anyway:

(23)   a.   Quando lo compra, Mario, il biglietto?

'when it buys, Mario, the ticket'

"When will he buy it, Mario, the ticket?"

b.   Mario, il biglietto, quando lo compra?

'Mario, the ticket, when it buys'

"Mario, the ticket, when will he buy it?"

Cooccurring with a *LD*, the particle *o* generally precedes it; if the dislocated element is the direct object, however, some speakers put it before the particle *o*:

(24)   a.   *O* Gianni quando parte?

'o Gianni when departs'

"Gianni, when will he depart?"

b.   *O* con Gianni quando si potrà parlare?

'o with Gianni when one will-be-able talk'

"To Gianni, when (the hell) will it be possible to talk?"

c.   *O* a casa quando tu ci vòi tornare?

'o to home when you there want return'

"Home, when do you intend to return?"

    d.   Gianni *o* quando tu l'hai visto?
           'Gianni o when you him-have seen'
           "Gianni, when (the hell) have you seen him?"

The direct object in (24d) could be a *HT* as well, but it must be said that with the insertion of a long intonative pause after it, which we can interpret as indicating a *HT*, the sentence turns out acceptable for all the speakers, as expected; without a similar pause, only some of them accept it. If we consider the pause as a signal distinguishing between *HT* and *LD* direct objects, we are allowed to suppose that those who accept a direct object followed by *o* without a pause in-between are interpreting it as a *LD* object. As we will further see, in case of two *LD* elements, the speakers who accept (24d) behave differently from those who don't.

Other arguments, if left dislocated, seriously compromise the grammaticality of the sentence:

    (25)   a.   ?? Gianni *o* quando parte?
                  'Gianni o when departs'
                  "Gianni, when will he depart?"

           b.   *Con Gianni *o* quando si potrà parlare?
                  'with Gianni o when one will-be-able talk'
                  "To Gianni, when will it be possible to talk?"

If there are two *LD* elements, some phenomena of microvariation occur; first of all, it is impossible to insert the particle *o* between the two *LDs*; even followed by an intonational pause, the first dislocated element isn't interpreted as a *HT*, and the question is agrammatical:

    (26)   *Il libro, *o* a Gianni quando tu glielo ridai?
           'the book o to Gianni when you to-him-it give-back'
           "When do you intend to return the book to Gianni?"

All the informants consider grammatical a sentence with two *LD*s preceded by the particle *o*:

(27)   *O* il libro, a Gianni, quando tu glielo ridai?
          'o the book to Gianni when you to-him-it give-back'
          "When do you intend to return the book to Gianni?"

Moreover it is possible to have the particle *o* at the end of the *LD* complex, but only if certain conditions are satisfied: some informants allow this only if one of the dislocated elements is the direct object, others if at least one of the dislocated elements bears a [+human] feature. It is worth noting that the latter don't accept a sentence like (24d) (with the direct object preceding *o*) as well-formed, while the former do; so it is possible to subdivide the speakers in two main groups A and B in relation to these phenomena:

A: they don't allow a *LD* direct object before the particle *o*, but allow two *LD*s in that position if at least one bears a [+human] feature;
B: they allow a *LD* direct object before the particle *o*: if such a direct object is present, more elements are permitted in that position;

The speakers A consider (28a) as a well-formed *disapproval* question, while the speakers B prefer (28b).:

(28)   a.   Del viaggio, con i tuoi amici *o* quando tu ne parli? (A: ok; B: ??)
                 'of-the trip with the your friends o when you of-it talk'
                 "When will you make up your mind to tell your friends about the trip?"

         b.   Il cane, col sapone *o* quando tu lo lavi?   (A: ??; B: ok)
                 'the dog with-the soap o when you it wash'
                 "When will you make up your mind to wash the dog with the soap?"

It seems that the position immediately to the left of the particle *o* is a special (and prominent) one, and that the access to it is ruled by varied factors.

3.3 Reduplication of the particle o

In this paragraph a particular construction of the particle *o* is studied. As said above, a *HT* always precedes *o*; moreover, it is possible to reduplicate the particle, adding another *o* before the *HT*:

(29)   *O* Gianni$_i$, *o* quando tu ci$_i$ parli?
         'o Gianni, o when you with-him talko
         "Gianni, when are you going to talk to him?"

From a semantic point of view, a sentence like (29) is equivalent to a sentence with only one particle; this means that a second *o* doesn't provide more informational content. The element between the two particles has the characteristics of a *HT*, appearing as a bare DP, corresponding to a PP in the sentence. However, some speakers accept a question with a PP between two particles *o*; compare (29) with (30):

(30)   *O* con Gianni, *o* quando tu ci parli?

This strange microvariation fact needs two specifications: first, the speakers who accept (30), don't allow the dropping of the resumptive pronoun *ci*; so *con Gianni* cannot be a standard *LD*, for which, as we have seen, a resumptive pronoun is optional; nevertheless it isn't a standard *HT*, considering the fact it is a PP, and not a DP. Furthermore, the speakers who accept (30), don't do the same with (31), where there appears what is presumably a *LD* direct object of a psychological verb, marked by the preposition *a*:

(31)   *O a te *o* che ti convince questo?
         'o to you o that you convinces this'
         "Does this really convince you?"

If the dislocated element appears without the preposition (and so it is probably a true *HT*), the sentence is accepted.

(32)   *O* te *o* che ti convince questo?

How can these facts be explained? It may be that the *HT* isn't part of the sentence, but rather an elliptic sentence by itself (as right dislocations in Kayne's (1994: 78-83) hypothesis). Thus

sentences like (29) or (30) result from the union of an elliptic and a complete sentence, both introduced by the particle *o*. The contrast between (29) and (30) shows that the syntax of similar elliptic sentences is subject to microvariation.

3.4 Summarizing

The particle *o* appears in the left periphery. Its normal position is at the beginning of the sentence, to the left of *wh-* elements; in *yes/no* questions it requires the interrogative marker *che* or, if appropriate, the sentential negation *un*. Normally it follows *HT* and precedes *LD*; some speakers allow a *LD* direct object before *o*; two *LD* elements can occur before the particle *o* at conditions which vary among speakers.

4. Conclusion

In this paper I have analysed the semantic interpretation of Fiorentino non-standard interrogative sentences marked by the particle *o*. This particle encodes a special semantic property of the *wh-* element or the *yes/no* propositional content. This means that what was traditionally seen just as a pragmatic difference, depends on semantic features encoded in syntax.

As expected, the syntax of left periphery is involved: *o* is the head of a very high projection inside the CP; the sequence of CP projections proposed by Benincà (2001), who slightly modifies Rizzi's (1997) one, is:

DiscourseP - ForceP - TopicP - FocusP - FinitinessP

Considering that *HT* occupies the specifier of DiscP and *LD* occupies that of TopP, the particle *o* is generated somewhere in-between these two positions; Obenauer (2003) proposes a number of different projections for non-standard interrogative types (in a *feature-checking* framework), and this leads me to think that *o* can be generated in different heads, depending on the non-standard interrogative type it has to mark.

That *o* can be reduplicated with *HT*s (see §3.3) can be considered a piece of evidence for supposing that *HT*s are elliptic sentences. If this is true, the projection containing *o* could be the highest in the sentence; as we have seen, one or more *LD*s are allowed at the left of *o*, with some microvariation phenomena among the speakers. These *LD*s are probably contained in the specifier of the projection of *o*, a special ("marked") position, which is accessed only under certain

conditions which vary. Anyway, from the analysis it emerges clearly that the topic-field cannot be interrupted by any element and therefore forms a compact structure.

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